DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 972 JC 890 477

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TITLE The Image of the Other: Media Support for a Pluralistic Curriculum.
PUB DATE 3 Nov 89
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Community College General Education Association (10th, New York, NY, November 2-3, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Audiovisual Aids; *Audiovisual Instruction; Community Colleges; Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural Pluralism; *General Education; *Social Bias; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

The integration of pluralism into the general education curriculum has long been a goal of the community college. The audiovisual resources of the college library can be particularly useful in examining and exploring other cultures, and in breaking down the barriers between members of one culture and "the other," that is, those on the other side of the artificial walls based on differences in race, sex, cultural background, age, and sexual preference. Audiovisual materials which document negative and/or stereotypical images of "the other" include: (1) the filmstrip, "The Distorted Image," which consists of a series of historic images from American newspapers, magazines, art objects, and ads from 1850 to 1922, showing how stereotyped images formed harmful popular views of Blacks, Italians, Jews, and others in the American consciousness; (2) the documentary, "Ethnic Notions," which shows how caricatures in art and film were used to create negative images of Blacks during the past 200 years; (3) "Rights and Reactions: Lesbian and Gay Rights on Trial," a videotape which presents footage from New York City Council hearings on a bill which proposed to eliminate discrimination in housing based on sexual preference; (4) the film, "Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women," which offers a visual synthesis of hundreds of ads and analyzes the psychology of advertisers' use of sex, myths, and stereotypes to sell products; and (5) the video, "Cold Water," which presents interviews with 13 Brown University students from 13 different countries discussing their images of Americans. A selected bibliography of films and videotapes related to the promotion of pluralism is appended. (JMC)

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The Image Of The Other: Media Support For A Pluralistic Curriculum

By Louise Spain

November 3, 1989

Paper Presented at the Community College General Education Association Conference (10th, New York, N.Y., November 2-3, 1989).

JC 890 477

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"THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER: MEDIA SUPPORT FOR A PLURALISTIC CURRICULUM"

PRESENTATION FOR "GENERAL EDUCATION: THE CHALLENGE OF THE 90s," THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE GENERAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION'S 10th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE, DELIVERED ON NOVEMBER 3, 1989 BY PROFESSOR LOUISE SPAIN, COORDINATOR OF MEDIA SERVICES, LA GUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY.

We've all heard, and perhaps said, a great deal about integrating pluralism into the general education curriculum. In fact, the CUNY Board of Trustees has required that each campus "develop a specific, local plan to confront racism and promote pluralism." In referring to this "special mandate for community colleges to break down barriers based on race, sex, cultural background, age, sexual preference or other artificial differences," President Raymond C. Bowen, the new president of LaGuardia Community College, in his Opening Sessions Address on September 18, 1989, remarked that "There is a need to take a good look at ourselves as an institution committed to cultural pluralism to ensure that the notion not only becomes embedded in the different curriculums that we offer but also form the basis of our own behavior as educational leaders."

Many of your own institutions are probably undergoing the same kind of self-analysis and re-evaluation. In the model of the partnership just described by my chief librarian, I expect to be asked to play a significant role in "embedding the notion of cultural pluralism" into the different curricula. How will this happen? Instructors will be looking to the library to provide materials which support the concept of a pluralistic curriculum. As the media librarian, I will recommend audiovisual materials on a wide range of sub-topics, such as those included on the attached mediagraphy.

Here are listed some of the concepts and topics which I forsee will be requested and used. Instructors will find the visual imagery

of media to be a particularly viable way of enabling students to examine and explore other cultures, breaking down the barriers alluded to by President Bowen by revealing the humanity of the "other." I heard a student leader describe how some LaGuardia students were very disturbed over the recent formation of a Gay and Lesbian Club which now meets at the college. They complained to her, and she took some of them by the hand and opened the door to the room in which the group was meeting. "See?" she said. "They're human." The visual element helps the other to become ourselves.

I'd like to show some excerpts from a few of the programs that are on this list, and if time allows, ask how you think they might be used to support your instructional objectives. While you watch, think of the concepts which are sometimes difficult to convey in class, but could be used to stimulate discussions through a media presentation.

A filmstrip called THE DISTORTED IMAGE is a good way for me to illustrate the double concept which I am here to try to convey, that visual imagery is a powerful educational tool, but it has also been used to mould public opinion, foster stereotypes and manipulate thought. By exposing these stereotypes, media material can serve as a kind of consciousness-raising which helps students to explore their own deep-seated prejudices or fear of the other.

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith compiled a series of historic images from American newspapers, magazines, art objects and ads from 1850-1922 in THE DISTORTED IMAGE. It shows how stereotyped images formed harmful popular views of Blacks, Italians, Jews, and others, in the American consciousness. (Excerpt--THE DISTORTED IMAGE: STEREOTYPE AND CARICATURE IN POPULAR AMERICAN GRAPHICS 1850-1922,

Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 30 min. filmstrip).

One of the groups most maligned by stereotyping throughout the history of the last 200 years has been black Americans. A documentary called ETHNIC NOTIONS shows how caricatures in art and film were used to create an image of the Sambo -- a lazy, shiftless, pleasure-loving Negro; the Coon -- a dandy or buffoon who entertained by imitating his white betters; and the Mammy -- fat, black, obedient, docile, loyal, protective of the white masters and stripped of any sexual allure. The tape gives a sociological and historical analysis of these roles, and how they changed after emancipation to the image of blacks as brutes: ravishing white virgins in such films as THE BIRTH OF A NATION, in order to justify violence against blacks. Here we see how these images were devised and what resulted from them. (Excerpt: ETHNIC NOTIONS, California Newsreel, 1987, 56 min. video).

Another group which has experienced discrimination simply by falling into the category of the "other" is the gay and lesbian community. In 1986, the New York City Council held hearings on a bill which proposed to eliminate discrimination in housing based on sexual preference. The footage from the hearings was used in a tape called RIGHTS AND REACTIONS: LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS ON TRIAL, in which people speaking for or against the bill reveal the extent of their tolerance or their prejudice against homosexuals. Students who hold discriminatory views may be the ones for whom you figuratively have to hold the door open and say "See? They're human," by showing this tape. This segment shows some of the extreme points of view of religious leaders at the hearings. (Excerpt--RIGHTS AND REACTIONS: LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS ON TRIAL, Tapestry International, 1987, 56 min. video).

A few years ago, a speaker named Jean Kilbourne did a study of the image of women in advertising and found, not that you'll be surprised, that it was being manipulated and exploited in order to sell products, to men and women both. In KILLING US SOFTLY: ADVERTISING'S IMAGE OF WOMEN, she makes a convincing visual systhesis using hundreds of ads, and analyzes the psychology of how advertisers use sex, guilt, competitiveness, myths and stereotypes to achieve one main goal--to sell. (Excerpt--KILLING US SOFTLY: ADVERTISING'S IMAGE OF WOMEN, Cambridge Documentary Films, 1981, 33 min. film).

And to conclude, you might want to see an image of yourselves--at least in the eyes of the foreign students who appear in your classrooms. In COLD WATER, Boston University interviewed 13 students from 13 different countries to discuss their image of Americans. What they tell us is that we value privacy much more than other cultures, and are always rushed for time. We're very ignorant about other parts of the world, and more superficial in the friendships we form (the "hi, how are you" syndrome). Here's what they have to say about their view of how American students behave in the classroom, and what they think of you, their professors. (Excerpt--COLD WATER, Intercultural Press Inc., 1988, 48 min. video).

There is a concept called "image-making"--you've heard it often in politics. But it happens everywhere, given the importance of visual information in our society, and it isn't always conscious, and it isn't always positive. We can use the same tool in the classroom--images--to expose some of the unconscious ways in which thinking has been manipulated and barriers have been formed. Media is one device to support the pluralistic curriculum that we have all made our goal.

PLURALISM: A SELECTED MEDIAGRAPHY OF MATERIALS AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, LIBRARY MEDIA RESOURCES CENTER

THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

VHS-216	Children of Apartheid, 50 min.
VHS-263	Ethnic Notions, 56 min.
VHS-119 #1-6	Eyes on the Prize, 60 min. ea.
VHS-114 #1-4	I Remember Harlem, 58 min. ea.
VHS-283	Roots - Vol. 1, 90 min.
VHS-196	Say Amen, Somebody, 100 min.
VHS-214	Woza Albert, 55 min.

CULTURE CLASH

VHS-207	Cold Water, 48 min.
VHS-190	El Norte, 141 min.
VHS-184	The Emerald Forest, 114 min.
VHS-191	The Gods Must Be Crazy, 109 min.
VHS-270	Staying On, 87 min.

FEMININE INEQUALITIES

VHS-277	The American Experience: Sins of Our Mothers, 58 min.
MP-77	A Doll's House, 109 min.
VHS-176	The Joy That Kills, 56 min.
MP-131	Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women, 33 min.
MP-119	The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter, 65 min.
VHS-187	No Longer Silent, 56 min.
VHS-299	The Power Pinch, 28 min.
VHS-321	Sexual Harassment: It's No Game, 30 min.
VHS-213	South Africa Belongs To Us, 30 min.
VC-128	A Village in Baltimore, 58 min.

IMMIGRATION

VHS-207	Cold Water, 48 min.
VHS-80 #6	The Constitution: That Delicate Balance - Immigration Reform, 60 min.
VHS-123	Dreams of Distant Shores, 28 min.
VHS-190	El Norte, 141 min.
VHS-322	Fiddler On The Roof, 180 min.
VHS-28	Going International: Bridging the Culture Gap,30 min.

VHS-117	Going International: Working in the USA, 30 min.
VHS-327	The Golden Door: Our Nation of Immigrants, 19 min.
VHS-128	Hester Street, 90 min.

NATIVE AMERICANS

VHS-264	The American Experience: Geronimo and the Apache Resistance, 58 min
VHS-289	The Great Spirit Within the Hole, 60 min.
VC-126 #1&2	Inughuit - The People at the Navel of the Earth, 85 min.

PREJUDICE

FS-277	The Distorted Image: Stereotype and Caricature in Popular American Graphics 1850-1922, 30 min.
VHS-273	The Klan - A Legacy of Hate in America, 30 min.
VHS-132	Night and Fog, 32 min.
VHS-201	Only The Ball Was White, 30 min.
VHS-206	Rights and Reactions: Lesbian and Gay Rights on Trial, 56 min.
VHS-268	A Soldier's Story, 102 min.
VHS-59	West Side Story, 152 min.
VHS-166	Witness to Apartheid, 56 min.

UNFAMILIAR CULTURES

VHS-118 #8	The Africans: A Conflict of Cultures, 60 min.
VHS-151	American Tongues, 56 min.
VHS-199	The Killing Fields, 142 min.
VHS-218	Ramparts of Clay, 87 min.
VHS-134	The Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God, 58 min.
VHS-267	Ugetsu, 96 min.

WORKING CLASSES

VHS-284	My Beautiful Laundrette, 93 min.
VHS-168	No Home on the Island, 29 min.
VC-127	One on Every Corner: Manhattan's Greek-Owned Coffee Shops, 55 min.
VC-131	Voices From a Steeltown, 28 min.

COMPILED BY: LOUISE SPAIN, COORDINATOR OF MEDIA SERVICES
NOVEMBER 1989

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